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CAUTION TO ANGLERS

• OR

'THE PRACTICAL ANGLER'

AND *'THE MODERN PRACTICAL ANGLER'*

COMPARED

BY W. C. STEWART

AUTHOR OF *'THE PRACTICAL ANGLER'*

EDINBURGH

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

Price One Shilling.

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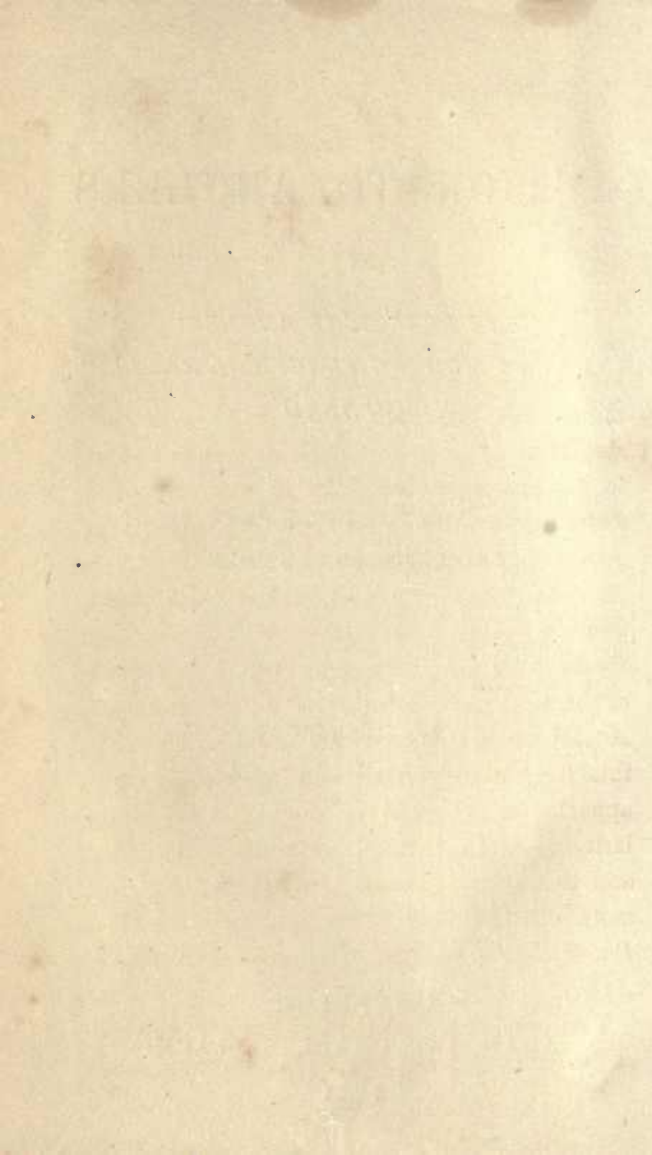
WITH
REMARKS UPON THE DECREASE OF TROUT
AND PROPOSED REMEDIES

BY W. C. STEWART

AUTHOR OF *'THE PRACTICAL ANGLER'*

EDINBURGH
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1871



PREFACE.

THAT Mr. Pennell should write a book, whether he had any information to impart or not, is a matter of which no one can complain. That he should call that book, however, by a title so similar to mine, my publishers complained of to his, and requested them to alter it, as the similarity or title might lead to purchasers getting the one book when they wished the other. As they declined to do this, and I am afraid that, in spite of the discovery of a previous *Practical Angler*, any confusion in this way might be chiefly detrimental to *The Practical Angler* which goes by my name, I publish this pamphlet—portions of which have already appeared in the *Field*—to show that the similarity is almost entirely confined to the title, and that no two systems of fly-fishing could be more different than those advocated in *The Practical Angler*, and *The Modern Practical Angler*.

I am further stimulated to what is somewhat an ungracious task, by not having seen any

review of *The Modern Practical Angler*, which thoroughly tears to tatters the web of absurdities in which Mr. Pennell has involved himself; most reviewers giving them the go-by lightly. The *Scotsman*, indeed, remarked that Mr. Pennell might safely be left to the mercy of his own arguments, and if all his readers were thoroughly qualified anglers it would be difficult to imagine a severer punishment; but as more of the readers of angling works are learners than proficient, and as they cannot so readily distinguish between the genuine and the counterfeit, I propose for their benefit criticising the system of fly-fishing and flies which its author expects to "revolutionise fly-fishing," and "write the epitaph of the present system of artificial flies."

I have also some grounds of complaint against *The Modern Practical Angler*, which will be fully stated in the following pages, and upon which I court the opinion of the angling community.

EDINBURGH, 27th March 1871.

A CAUTION TO ANGLERS.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE FIELD.

MODERN AND ANCIENT (?) PRACTICAL ANGLERS.

SIR—In your paper of the 17th ult. I notice a letter from Mr. H. Cholmondeley-Pennell, in which he backs up the views of fly-fishing down stream which he has advocated in his book, *The Modern Practical Angler*. As Mr. Pennell has alluded to me frequently in his book, and almost entirely in his letter, as an exponent of up-stream fishing, perhaps you will allow me space to say something in reply to his letter, and also to make a few remarks upon his book. First, then, for the letter. In it Mr. Pennell says the arguments in favour of up-stream fishing are :—

“1. That, as trout always lie head up stream, the angler fishing from below is less likely to be seen than one fishing from above.”

“*Answer.*—The position of the eye of a trout is such as to enable him to see much more readily anything above or on one side than in front of him ; and in rippling water, such as trout streams usually

consist of, the angler making moderately long casts will, for all practical purposes, be out of 'ken' of the fish, whether he stands above or below."

If Mr. Pennell in his rather vague answer means that trout see as well behind as in front, why does he in his book instruct anglers to throw a foot above a rising fish? why not throw a foot behind him? If Mr. Pennell admits, what every angler knows to be a fact, that trout see better in front than behind—nature having formed them for looking out for their food the way it comes, down stream—why does he attempt to answer the argument at all?

"2. That the angler striking from below is likely to strike the hook into the fish's jaws, whereas the angler striking from above is likely to 'pull the flies straight out of his mouth.'"

"*Answer.*—This is true as an abstract proposition, but as applied to the question of fly-fishing up stream is quite untrue. When the fly is being drawn straight down stream, the trout, rising from below, is forced, owing to the position of the gut, *to turn round before he can take the fly*; so that at the moment of rising the fish would be in precisely the same position with regard to the angler, whether the latter was fishing up or down."

In answer to Mr. Pennell's answer, it may be pointed out that an up-stream fisher never draws his flies at all, but allows them to float down as the natural insect does; also, that he very rarely casts

directly above him, but generally up and across. Mr. Pennell says (upon what grounds it is difficult even to imagine) that "the position of the gut compels the trout to turn round before he can take the fly." That is, that the trout sees the fly coming down stream, but also sees the gut is in his way so he either bolts up stream or waits till the fly passes him, and then turns round with his head down stream and catches it. It is by no means clear why the gut should be more in the trout's way in the one position than the other; but most anglers will be of opinion that if the trout saw the gut he would not put himself to so much trouble to take the fly. Had Mr. Pennell stated that trout turned a summersault or two before taking the fly, it would be quite as probable in theory and correct in fact.

Mr. Pennell's answer to the third argument will be fully replied to subsequently, in taking notice of his flies and system of fishing.

Mr. Pennell in his letter adds :—

"Even, therefore, if it could be proved that somewhat more fish were to be taken by fishing up than down stream, anglers might well hesitate before they adopted the system. My own experience, however, leads to an opposite conclusion, and it is an experience corroborated, as I believe, by that of the great majority of anglers. Indeed, Mr. Stewart himself practically admits this when he states that

‘ninety-nine anglers out of a hundred fish down ;’ and in a subsequent (fourth) edition that, notwithstanding what he has written, ‘fishing up stream with the fly has *not* been adopted by a large portion of the angling community.’”

I do not doubt that Mr. Pennell and the majority of anglers may catch more fish fishing down than up—probably for the reason mentioned at page 67 of the fifth edition of *The Practical Angler*, which, as all your readers may not have a copy beside them, I will quote :—

“Fishing up is *much more* difficult than fishing down, requiring more practice, and a better acquaintance with the habits of the trout ; and we believe that a mere novice would, on a large water, catch more trout by fishing down than up, because the latter *requires more nicety* in casting ; but to attain anything like eminence in fly-fishing the angler must fish up,” etc.

Mr. Pennell says that I practically admit the benefit of down-stream fishing when I say that ninety-nine anglers out of a hundred fish down. I published *The Practical Angler* thirteen years ago for the sole purpose of showing that the *ninety-nine anglers fished wrong* ; and how Mr. Pennell can so distort my statements and misrepresent my ideas as to say that I “practically admit to be right” what I spent weeks in labouring to prove wrong, I cannot understand. The unblushing coolness of the state-

ment is enough to take away one's breath. Mr. Pennell continues :—" And in a subsequent (fourth) edition, that, notwithstanding what he has written, fishing up stream with the fly has not been adopted by a large portion of the angling community." Picking out a few lines here and there, without giving the context, is not the fairest way of representing a question ; and if Mr. Pennell intended quoting the passage at all, he should have finished it. It is too lengthy to give here, but the reader will find it in pages 67 to 71 of *The Practical Angler*. The number of up-stream fishers, however, has greatly increased of late years, as you are no doubt aware ; and they will continue to increase, in spite of Mr. Pennell's backsliding to the old system.

Although I think I have reason to complain of some things in Mr. Pennell's book, I should never have thought of writing to any newspaper upon the subject had I not been attacked ; having been attacked, however, I suppose I may be "permitted to speak for myself," and if in doing so I require to make more reference to *The Practical Angler* than I like, I hope your readers will excuse me. I offer no excuse to Mr. Pennell for making remarks upon his book, because it is a volume with very considerable pretensions, and his writing again shows that he courts rather than shuns criticism.

The first subject which Mr. Pennell lays much stress upon is the form of hook—a subject which he correctly considers of great importance—and intro-

duces what he calls the Pennell hook, "the result of some thought and experiment." If your readers will compare pages 7 to 10 of *The Modern Practical Angler* with pages 47 and 48 of *The Practical Angler*, I think they will be forced to the conclusion that Mr. Pennell's hook need not have cost him any thought or experiment. The illustrations and reasoning in both cases are almost identical, the only difference being, that he has made the turn of the hook at a more acute angle, rendering it more liable to break, and the barb of the hook longer, rendering it more difficult to fix.

Mr. Pennell's system of flies and fly-fishing, however, is what he prides himself upon, and but for it his "book" would certainly not have been written." Upon these points there is something both new and old ;—the flies are new with a vengeance ; the system is a return to the ancient. Fly-fishers he divides into two classes, formalists and colourists, which he pits against each other, and then pitches into each by turns. By the formalists Mr. Pennell seems to mean the school so ably represented by Mr. Francis Francis, who believe that an exact imitation of the fly on the water will prove more killing than any other. This school may very well be left to answer Mr. Pennell for themselves. It is not quite so easy to know what he means by the "colourists." The following is his reply of the "colourists" to the "formalists":—

“Your theory supposes that trout can detect the nicest shades of distinction between specimens of flies which on a summer’s afternoon may be numbered actually by hundreds, thus crediting them with an amount of entomological knowledge which even a professed naturalist, to say nothing of the angler himself, rarely possesses ; whilst at the same time you draw your flies up and across stream in a way in which no natural insect is ever seen, not only adding to the impossibility of discriminating between different species, but often rendering it difficult for the fish to identify the flies as flies. The only thing a fish can distinguish under these circumstances, besides the size of fly, is its colour. We therefore regard form as a matter of comparative indifference, and colour as all-important.”

As the first part of this extract is almost word for word the same as *The Practical Angler*, I am entitled to suppose that Mr. Pennell classes me as a colourist. The last two sentences of the passage quoted are Mr. Pennell’s own ; how far they agree with *The Practical Angler* the following quotation will show :—

“We must now consider what it is necessary to imitate, or what do trout take, or rather mistake, the artificial fly for. As before stated, we believe that, deceived by an appearance of life, they take it for what it is intended to imitate—a fly, or some other aquatic insect. In proof of this, artificial flies are not of much use unless the trout are at the time

feeding on the natural insect ; and an artificial fly will kill twenty trout for one which the feathers composing it, rolled round the hook without regard to shape, will. Nay, more, a neatly made, natural-looking fly will, where trout are shy, kill three trout for one which a clumsy fly will. . . . The great point, then, in fly-dressing, is to make the artificial fly resemble the natural insect in shape."

Having put, as he expresses it, "both formalists and colourists out of court," Mr. Pennell proceeds to have his innings. Some miscellaneous remarks follow about dry and wet flies, imitating nature, and simulating life ; these processes being accomplished as follows:—"It is of the utmost consequence that the fly should be as 'fly-like' and characteristic as possible, so that, notwithstanding its rapid and unnatural movements, *it may be at once and unmistakably identified as a fly.*" Mr. Pennell backs this up by the statement that "ninety-nine men out of a hundred find it best to give a slight movement to the fly in the water." Did it never occur to Mr. Pennell, and the ninety-nine men out of a hundred who, he says, keep him company, that the chances of the said fly being "at once and unmistakably identified as a fly" would be considerably improved by a natural instead of an unnatural movement? Mr. Pennell, be it observed, says men, not anglers. How the men may fish I cannot say ; but for the anglers on this side the Tweed (and they are very

bad to beat), I have fished with all the best of them, and not one gives any motion to his flies.

There is one point upon which a large number of the very best anglers will agree with Mr. Pennell : that is, "general shape, general colour, and size, are all that can be distinguished by the fish. These are the points, therefore, to be kept in view in the construction of artificial trout-flies." He then proceeds to construct what he calls three typical flies upon these principles, and his method of doing so, or "imitating nature," is profoundly original and thoroughly amusing. "As regards form or shape, no question can arise, as the selected families are all unmistakably and characteristically *flies* in the proper sense of the term, having wings, legs," etc. A little farther on : "The great majority of the most favourite river flies belong to the order Neuroptera, or nerve-winged insects, the wings of which, being filmy and transparent, cannot be really imitated by feathers, or by any other available material. Wings, therefore, are merely an incumbrance to the artificial trout-fly, and should be entirely rejected." Having established, on page 72, that "it is doubly important that the imitation insect should be as characteristic and fly-like as possible," and further established that all flies have wings, Mr. Pennell commences to imitate nature by dispensing with wings altogether. The reader must not suppose, however, that the fly is to be left almost naked. Not at all ; this is not the way Mr. Pennell imitates nature. The deficiency

thus caused is to be filled up by giving the fly three times the number of legs to which it had a natural right, or what he himself describes (his own words) "as an unnatural quantity of legs."

Having now got a fly as "fly-like as possible," with no wings and an unnatural quantity of legs, he proceeds to the next great desideratum—colour. And here I may remark that, when I reduced the list of artificial flies to six (three winged flies and three spiders), I thought I had done quite enough in that way ; but Mr. Pennell, having hit upon the making of flies without wings, has an obvious advantage over me, and reduces them to three, what he calls typical flies, and selects what he says are the three colours most usually predominating in river insects. These colours are—first, dark green ; second, fiery or cinnamon brown ; third, darkish golden olive. If any reader will look at the illustrations of these flies in Mr. Pennell's book, he will at once come to the conclusion that Mr. Pennell has been singularly appropriate in his choice of a name for them, as, not being an imitation of anything at present existing, they must be typical of something to come.

Such are the methods of imitating nature in the construction of flies, and simulating life in the working of them, which are to revolutionise fly-fishing. On coming to some of the passages quoted, a horrid suspicion crossed the writer's mind that Mr. Pennell—who is very fond of a joke—might be in fun ; but no, he is evidently terribly in earnest ; and if no

other person believes in his system, he at least believes in it himself, as the following modest quotation will show :—

“Indeed, when I think how great that ingenuity has been, how much has been written, and charmingly written, for the last two centuries, to teach how to make and use what I have been exhorting my readers to discard as useless ; and what a complicated and nicely-balanced system has been thereon elaborated ; it is not without a pang of regret I have undertaken the ungracious task of writing what may perhaps eventually prove to be its epitaph.”

So much for Mr. Pennell's theory of fly-fishing ; and now to take a look at his practice. He says his system has been “worked out, tested, and re-tested by myself during some twenty years' practical experience of fly-fishing on many of the principal rivers and lakes of the three kingdoms.” As a proof of this he writes :—

“Local prejudices are by no means confined to professional fishermen. Even first-rate amateur performers are often imbued with the notion that no flies but those they have been accustomed to consider the correct thing on particular rivers and streams will kill in them. I remember once fishing the most famous trouting loch in Scotland, in company with two of her most celebrated (and justly celebrated) anglers, and when I showed them the flies I meant to use, they assured me that they ‘would never

kill fish in Lochleven !' At the end of the first day, however, my basket, which included seven trout, weighing 14 lb., was found to be heavier than both theirs."

This passage has been already answered in the *Scotsman* newspaper, but, as all your readers may not see the *Scotsman*, I quote it :—

" We have heard something about that great national overthrow and humiliation. There is evidence extant to the effect that those two luckless amateurs whom Mr. Pennell came to Scotland to put to shame, said, not that his flies would not kill fish, but that they were not so suitable to kill fish at that place as some other flies. Also it is averred that—though it is true that in two or three hours' evening fishing Mr. Pennell, with his miraculous flies, did happen to kill seven large trout, whilst his companions and victims happened to alight on fewer or smaller—it is also true that on the next day, which was a much longer and consequently fairer trial, one of the vanquished, with the flies common to the place, did better than Mr. Pennell and the flies in which he puts all his trust, by something like fourfold. Of course this is but a trifling incident ; but just for that reason, as well as for another, it cannot, as stated by Mr. Pennell, be admitted as evidence of his theory."

As one of the occupants of the boat on this celebrated occasion, I may be permitted to add that Mr.

Pennell—who, it is as well to mention, was mostly using winged flies, and not of the typical colour—thought his flies very superior, and was assured by me that neither flies nor fishing mattered much on Lochleven, as the very best anglers were frequently disgracefully beaten by parties who had never thrown a fly before.

What Mr. Pennell calls the first day's fishing commenced at 6 P.M., and terminated shortly after 8 P.M., when Mr. Pennell had seven trout, one of his companions six, and the other five. He, however, was fortunate in securing a three-and-a-half-pounder, so that his basket weighed more than either of the others. The wording of the passage, "His basket, which included seven trout," would lead to the supposition that he had other trout besides, which was not the case : seven was the entire take. Now, what I complain of is, that Mr. Pennell should misrepresent the statements of his companions, suppress the fact of there being a second and whole day's fishing—in which, as well as on the gross time, he was very much behind one of his companions—and proceed upon this to claim superiority for flies, which, if he was using at all, I never saw. Such conduct needs no comment ; and if it was only a slip of memory, Mr. Pennell has had plenty of time to put matters right since the above appeared in the *Scotsman*. It may be as well to mention, what the *Scotsman's* reviewer has omitted, that, as we were fishing three in a boat, and Mr. Pennell was a

stranger, he had always an end of the boat to himself ; and, as he either could not or would not cast but from his right hand, he was half the time casting over the centre of the boat, thereby considerably lessening the chances of the occupant of that station, who had always to watch his opportunity to cast when Mr. Pennell was not.

The question of up or down stream fly-fishing Mr. Pennell passes over very lightly, merely assuming that the latter is correct—the reason, I suppose, that he has attempted to strengthen his position by his answers in *The Field*. As the arguments in favour of up-stream fishing are the same in Mr. Francis's book as in mine, and much more concisely stated, I take the liberty of quoting them :—

“ And now a word or two about the much-discussed point as to fishing up stream or down ; though what there is to discuss in it, or how any difference of opinion can exist, I am at a loss to understand. The angler should never fish down stream if he can by any possibility fish up. The fish lie with their heads up stream. They see the flies coming down towards them, and they rise to meet them. The angler is far behind them, and of course they are not so likely to see him. If a fish takes the fly fairly, then the angler will, if he strikes properly, hardly ever miss his fish, because he pulls the fly towards, and as it were into, the fish's mouth ; whereas in fishing down he will perpetually pull it

out of his mouth. Added to this, in fishing down, every fish for twenty yards can see him coming, and the best will cease rising and take shelter under some weed. Again, if he hooks a good fish that requires play, he must take it down over unfished ground, disturbing every fish for some distance, or create much disturbance of the water, and risk breaking the hold on the tackle. . . . But to cast down stream, and work the fly up, is not fly-fishing."

At page 68 of *The Practical Angler* there is the following, alluding to anglers of Mr. Pennell's stamp :—

"As no amount of mere argument will convince such, we offer to find two anglers who, on a water suitable for showing the superiority of fishing up, will be more successful than any three anglers fishing down after the ordinary method."

This passage has remained for thirteen years unchallenged, but has probably escaped Mr. Pennell's notice. However, to bring the matter to a practical test, if he will fish himself under the before-mentioned conditions, and use his typical flies, I will find an angler to fish against him, and will bet a considerable sum of money, to be given to any charity the winner may choose, that the said angler will catch two pounds' weight of trout for his one ; and, until the question is put to the proof, it is useless writing more upon the subject.

In his chapter on worm-fishing, Mr. Pennell introduces a new worm-tackle, by reducing the three-hook tackle, which usually goes by my name, to two, and making the hooks a little larger. The following are the reasons, *pro* and *con*, as given in the *Scotsman* :—

“In the first place, he mistakes when he represents that tackle as consisting always of four hooks. Mr. Stewart, we think, once wrote somewhere ‘three or four ;’ but three has been the understood and adopted number for many years. In the second place, when advocating his own plan of two hooks, Mr. Pennell gives five reasons, every one of which admits of being smashed :—(1) ‘It is baited in less than half the time.’ The time cannot possibly be *less* than half, and, as a good deal of the time employed in the operation, such as taking from the bag and bringing the bait into a proper position, must be employed whether the hooks are two or four, the time saved by omitting two hooks must be quite infinitesimal. (2.) ‘The worm lives much longer.’ In both cases the worm lives quite long enough for the purpose, and it dies by being drowned, not by being transfixed. (3.) ‘Its appearance is much more natural and lively.’ Quite the reverse ; with two hooks the greater proportion of the worm must either be left entirely unarmed, or a large and clumsy ‘bulge’ or ‘slack’ must be left between the two hooks, whilst with three hooks the bait can be

thrown into any form the angler chooses. (4.) 'The hooks are comparatively unseen.' Again quite the reverse; Mr. Pennell admits that his two hooks must be larger than Mr. Stewart's three, and two large hooks are much more easily detected than three tiny ones. (5.) 'They are 'disgorged' in half the time.' That would be true if in the one case the trout were always caught by two hooks, and in the other by four, which is very rare, and not the common case."

In addition, I may mention that I tested the two hooks thoroughly fourteen years ago, fishing half-hour about with the two hooks and the single hook, and found the latter killed most.

The chapter on Mayfly-fishing, in *The Modern Practical Angler*, is entirely copied from *The Practical Angler*, as your readers may see for themselves by comparison; indeed, in this case so closely has Mr. Pennell stuck to his text, as to raise the suspicion that he is practically unacquainted with what he was writing about, and was afraid to introduce any novelty for fear of "putting his foot in it." Would it be asking too much of Mr. Pennell to let us know how often he fished with the creeper and Mayfly, and what he caught?

By the way, it is rather curious to find Mr. Pennell, who lays considerable claims to ichthyology, and would have every angler be an ichthyologist, making a mistake in the ichthyology of the principal fish he is writing about. The salmon or kipper, he says, "is a male salmon after spawning;" whereas

a kipper means merely a male fish, whether clean, foul, or kelted. A baggit, he says, is a female fish just after spawning; whereas a baggit—as Mr. Pennell might know from the meaning of the word—is a female fish immediately before spawning.

To bring my lengthy, and I am afraid tedious, letter to a conclusion, I have endeavoured as much as possible to confine my remarks to those points on which *The Modern Practical Angler* and *The Practical Angler* are at variance. I mentioned previously that I thought I had some grounds of complaint against Mr. Pennell; these are, to state them briefly, that he has distorted my statements, suppressed facts which were against him, borrowed my ideas and information, and made an appropriate consummation to the whole by borrowing my title. And, not content with that, he prefixes to my original title the word “Modern,” thereby conveying the insinuation that mine is ancient—in fact, adding insult to injury. Your readers will probably perceive that I am not pleased with Mr. Pennell; whether “I do well to be angry” or not, I leave you and them to judge, and also the materials on which to form a judgment.

W. C. STEWART.

EDINBURGH, *October 1.*

MODERN AND ANCIENT PRACTICAL ANGLERS.

SIR—"Tantæne animis cælestibus iræ?" Your excellent correspondent and my very good friend Mr. Stewart is in a passion, and the fact is so patent throughout the three columns of invective which you publish in your last number, that it was almost a labour of love on his part to wind up with a solemn declaration of the fact. As, however, I am not aware that in my book, with which he is so angry, I have ever mentioned his name except in terms of marked (and deservedly marked) eulogy, I am driven to conclude that it must be my matter, and not my manner, that has excited his wrath. In other words, he has paid my arguments the proverbial compliment of losing his temper at them.

Whether he has any other just grounds, or any grounds whatever, for doing so, I will, with your permission, briefly examine, and I shall at once pass to the personal questions at issue between us, though, for my own part, I detest personalities, if for no other reason than that they possess so small a share of interest for the public at large. Mr. Stewart, however, drives me to the *argumentum ad hominem*, and I am reluctantly obliged to follow.

On the original *casus belli*, Up or Down stream fishing, I shall not dwell, as I have nothing to add to the arguments which I adduced on this subject in

The Field of September 24. Mr. Stewart has now equally fully stated his views ; and both having been supplemented and commented upon in a number of able letters from your correspondents, amongst whom I recognised with pleasure so excellent a fisherman and sportsman as Col. Whyte, the question may be said to be fairly before the High Court of Anglers, and they will no doubt be able to form their own judgment on the point. The same observations apply to the theory of trout flies, and how they should be used. If those who care about the subject will look at my book, *The Modern Practical Angler*, they will find the whole question carefully examined, and most of Mr. Stewart's arguments refuted by anticipation.

The first point on which Mr. Stewart falls foul of me personally is the form of hook now manufactured under my name, and which Mr. Stewart says in effect is copied from one recommended in his book. This hook of mine more nearly approaches the sneek than any other kind. On turning to the pages to which he refers in *The Practical Angler*, find that Mr. Stewart recommends, as the result of his investigations, the ordinary "round-bend" hooks which have been manufactured by Messrs. Bartlett and Addlington for many years, and suggests on his own account *no improvement or modification in them whatever*. Mr. Stewart's hook, which he accuses me of plagiarising, must therefore be pronounced a myth.

Another subject of attack is the title of my book—*The Modern Practical Angler*—in which Mr. Stewart complains that I have “appropriated” that of his own. Is Mr. Stewart in earnest, or is he perpetrating a little joke to test the angling erudition of the readers of *The Field*? Can he really be ignorant that he has himself actually transferred bodily to the first page of his own volume the exact title of another book published some fifteen years before—*The Practical Angler*, by “Piscator” (Simpkin and Marshall, 1843 and 1846)—and which has subsequently passed through several editions? Further, can Mr. Stewart be unaware that during the last half-century there have been no less than thirteen angling books published, of the titles of which the word “Practical” forms part? But Mr. Stewart has not only plagiarised the title of another author, he has also falsified his own, inasmuch as the term *Practical Angler* implies a treatise on angling generally, whilst his is admittedly only a monograph—a treatise, that is, on *one subject*. I am sorry to be obliged thus to turn the tables on Mr. Stewart, but he has challenged the rejoinder.

Mr. Stewart objects that in my chapter on Creeper and May-fly fishing I have borrowed from him. If any one else, after comparing the two books, should be of the same opinion, I shall be surprised. I willingly admit my obligations to Mr. Stewart, for many valuable suggestions, both on this and other points; but I fancied that in this instance I

had sufficiently acknowledged them, by recommending all anglers to study Mr. Stewart's "excellent chapter on the subject."

Again, as regards his worm-tackle, Mr. Stewart complains that, in contrasting it with my own, I have represented it as consisting of four hooks, when the real number which he recommends is three.

In reply, I have only to observe that in his *Practical Angler*, which I have now before me, the illustrative diagram of his worm-tackle shows the number of hooks *as four*, and that I have, when referring to this subject in the *Modern Practical Angler*, actually taken the trouble of *giving a facsimile of the tackle in question*, adding, that "I give Mr. Stewart the greatest credit for the originality of this idea, which belongs to him alone." In the name of common sense, what can Mr. Stewart find here to take exception to? Are not these repeated and specific acknowledgments, with others of a similar character, sufficient to satisfy the most exacting requirements of the most irritable of the *irritabile genus*?

But the greatest stumbling-block of all to Mr. Stewart appears to be the account which I have given of a case in which flies of the colours I advocate for lake fishing—viz. green and yellow—were found on Lochleven to be more successful than those of two other anglers. I did not, of course, so far violate the canons of courtesy as to mention either of these gentlemen by name, or give any clue by

which they could be identified ; but, as Mr. Stewart has "put on the cap," I am happy to acknowledge that he was one of the "justly celebrated anglers" referred to in my book as having been on this occasion the victims of local prejudice—a result which I took trouble to emphasise, "I attribute, of course, solely to the flies, not, be it well understood, to the fisherman." My memory of all the circumstances of this "fly-match," if I may so for the moment characterise it, differs materially from Mr. Stewart's on almost every one of the important points to which he alludes ; as, for example, the day on which the fishing in question occurred, my remembrance being that we fished on three distinct days, and not two, and that it was on the second or complete day that my creel outweighed his ; the number of the trout composing my basket on the day in question ; the proportionate weight of Mr. Stewart's basket on the day following, when I do not think either of the takes were weighed at all ; and so on.

However, be my memory in those matters right or wrong, it is but of little consequence. The one point that I do remember distinctly, and which I most gladly recall, is the very charming visit to "the most famous loch in Scotland," for which I was indebted to the friendly courtesy and kindness of two of her most famous anglers. In the hope of recalling such a pleasure, I so far accept Mr. Stewart's challenge that I will gladly, when the opportunity presents itself, fish a match with him in the same boat, and

on the same loch, each to *use his own flies tied by himself*. This will be a better test of the merits of our respective flies than a burn-side match, in which so much more must depend upon the relative skill of the performers ; and if I should lose, “as lose full well I may,” I am sure that I cannot “take my death from a nobler hand.”

H. CHOLMONDELEY-PENNELL.

WEYBRIDGE, *October 10.*

SIR—I observe in your paper of 15th inst.—which, owing to being from home I did not see sooner—a letter from Mr. Pennell, to which you will perhaps allow me a few final words in reply. I thought I had made my grounds of complaint sufficiently plain, but Mr. Pennell, who does not believe my statements, and has a remarkable knack of glorifying himself, will have it that I have paid him the compliment of getting in a rage at his arguments. The whole tenor of my letter made it sufficiently plain that I considered his arguments much more calculated to provoke merriment than wrath ; and, so far as they are concerned, Mr. Pennell, as the *Scotsman* remarked, might safely be left to the mercy of his own arguments. But there are one or two other matters which I cannot pass over without remark.

I do not intend discussing with Mr. Pennell

whether he has borrowed or not—I gave the necessary references, and your readers can judge for themselves—but would merely remark in passing that upon the subject of Creeper and May-fly fishing he has not, as requested, informed us when he used these baits, and what he caught with them. His silence upon this point might lead to the supposition that he had seldom or never fished with them, as Mr. Pennell does not, as a rule, “hide his light under a bushel ;” and if this supposition that he has little or no practical experience should be correct, and he did not borrow his information, most people would have some difficulty in making out how he got it at all.

Now, as to the title of my book, I must confess my ignorance. I was quite unaware of the existence of any other *Practical Angler*. In what Mr. Pennell would call this extreme want of erudition, however, I do not stand alone. Every angler to whom I have spoken was in the same position ; so, I suppose, were the great majority of the readers of *The Field* ; so, in August 1869, was Mr. Pennell himself. In that month Mr. Pennell mentioned to me that he intended writing a book upon angling, in which he meant to go in extensively for general fishing, said I had *monopolised* the best title, and asked me if I thought *The General Angler* would be a good title for his. Perhaps Mr. Pennell will kindly inform us when he discovered the existence of *The Practical Angler*, published in 1843.

I charged Mr. Pennell with misrepresenting matters about an excursion to Lochleven. This, he correctly says, "appears the greatest stumbling-block of all," and the reason is plain enough. The other differences between us might be matters of opinion, but this is a matter of fact. Mr. Pennell, who appears generally to stick to his statements—or rather misstatements—but does not seem quite sure about his memory, seems to think there were three separate days, and that the trout were not weighed on the day he was beaten. There was just one evening's fishing, as I stated, and the following day till about four o'clock; and the occupant of the boat who beat Mr. Pennell in the proportion of something like four to one weighed his take, because it was the best he ever got on the loch—26 lbs. Mr. Pennell and the other occupant did not weigh, not having much to weigh. It is quite common for anglers on Lochleven who have got little not to weigh; for instance, Mr. Pennell was the only one who weighed his fish on the previous evening.

Mr. Pennell says that he "did not violate the canons of courtesy." If putting words into your companions' mouths which they never used, misrepresenting the facts of the case, and upon this accusing your two companions in print of being the victims of local prejudices, be not violating the canons of courtesy, then our ideas of courtesy on this side the Tweed need modernising as much as our principles of angling.

Mr. Pennell appropriately reserves a crowning absurdity for the conclusion of his last letter, when, in answer to a challenge to test the merits of up and down stream fishing, he accepts it so far as to test the merits of his flies by a day's fishing on a loch where neither flies nor fishing matter much. It would occur to any one but Mr. Pennell that both flies and fishing would be much better tested on some stream where the trout are wary, and where great care is required in the selection of flies, and great skill in the using of them. His reason for changing from stream to loch is that it requires more skill on a stream, or, as he himself puts it, "a burn-side match, in which so much more must depend upon the individual skill of the performers."

When I suggested in my last that the reason why Mr. Pennell had not succeeded in up-stream fishing was want of skill, I had an idea I was pretty near the mark, but was certainly not prepared for a confession of the same from him; but, since he does not consider himself good enough, I am quite willing to allow him to fish by deputy, and upon flies I will give him his own way (he can tie the flies of the one party, and I will tie those of the other); and surely he can find among the great majority of anglers who keep him company one to do battle in his behalf. I thank you for your insertion of my last letter on this subject, and hope that next time I address you it may be on a more agreeable topic.

W. C. STEWART.

EDINBURGH, *October 22.*

SIR—From his letter of October 26 it seems that Mr. Stewart is very far from “pleased” with my book, *The Modern Practical Angler*; and this time his wrath is somewhat more intelligible. It must doubtless be not a little irritating, when a man has gratuitously provoked a personal controversy, to find himself thrown hopelessly on his back at every one of his intended standpoints.

Mr. Stewart twits his antagonist with copying the pattern of his hook. His antagonist mildly replies that, after careful search, no such pattern can be found anywhere in Mr. Stewart’s writings; in fact, that Mr. Stewart has not, and never had, any “pattern of hook” whatever, from which to copy.

Mr. Stewart taxes his opponent with plagiarising his worm-tackle, and misrepresenting it for his own purposes. His opponent gently refers to chapter and verse where he has published a facsimile of Mr. Stewart’s tackle, and accorded to its author the entire credit of the invention.

Mr. Stewart charges his adversary with appropriating the title of his book; and his adversary blandly retorts that “Mr. Stewart’s title” is not Mr. Stewart’s at all, but somebody else’s, from whom Mr. Stewart has bodily appropriated, whilst at the same time falsifying it.

Finally, Mr. Stewart attributes his competitor’s

success in beating him on a particular occasion to "chance," and the publishing of the fact (*N.B.*, without names or dates) to "want of courtesy;" to which his competitor rejoins, still with perfect suavity, that whatever personal publicity had occurred in the matter had been given wholly by Mr. Stewart himself—that it was perfectly true that he did happen to beat Mr. Stewart on the occasion in question—and further, that he will have pleasure in backing himself to do the same thing again.

All this, I say, must naturally have been irritating to Mr. Stewart, who has from the outset been somehow rather exercised in his temper; for though I wished, for the sake of former acquaintance, to do my "spiriting as gently" as possible—a courtesy which, I regret to observe, has been wasted on my opponent, who does not seem to have any eye for what are called the "amenities of literature"—still facts are facts, and sometimes cannot but be sadly unpalatable, however politely they may be stated. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in his last letter Mr. Stewart should endeavour, by stirring up a great cloud of verbal dust, and executing the manœuvre known as "holding and spurring," to mystify the direct issues which he originally raised, and thus to ride off with some show at least of dignity.

I gladly help to make a bridge for a flying foe, and forbear to press him further by commenting, as I might, upon the somewhat peculiar notions of

courtesy and modesty which have prompted Mr. Stewart—not once, but a dozen times during this correspondence—to attribute to me a want of literary good faith, and of angling skill as compared with his own, for which there is an utter absence of justification in our relative antecedents, literary or piscatorial. Nor do I care to notice, except perhaps by a passing smile, the comical tone—suggestive somehow of canes and pedagogues—in which he has thought fit to catechise me as to the extent of my experience and qualifications in “creeper fishing,” “May-fly fishing,” “up-stream fishing,” and what not. Mr. Stewart is very welcome to his own opinion (however erroneous) on these points, as I am unconscious of meditating any immediate application to him for an angling diploma.

In the same way I abstain from amplifying what I have already written with regard to Mr. Stewart’s challenges to fish a match—always by *deputy* be it observed—either against myself or a friend, on a Scotch burn-side. Such a contest would prove nothing, and convince nobody. Enough that I am prepared, as I have stated, to back my rod against Mr. Stewart’s in a repetition of the only match, if it can be called such, that has been practically in question during this controversy, and the accuracy of my account of which he has disputed. But no “deputies,” *bien entendu*. As they say on the turf, “owners up.”

I must apologise for this (last I hope) trespass on

your courtesy in these merely personal matters, of which your readers must long ere this be as weary as I am ; and, wishing Mr. Stewart a more manageable theme and a less unmanageable opponent for his next controversial *début*, I am, etc.,

H. CHOLMONDELEY-PENNELL.

WEYBRIDGE, *November 1.*

[We do not see the possible use of permitting this controversy to continue, and therefore we now close it.—ED.]

When I announced in my last letter that I did not intend writing again to *The Field*, I by no means intended that Mr. Pennell was to be allowed to ride off in triumph. I made the announcement with the view, as it were, of unearthing Mr. Pennell, and getting him to show his true colours. Any one can see the difference in style between his first two letters and his last, though few would have expected that when he thought there was to be no further castigation, he would have indulged in such an astounding amount of assertion and impertinence. Assertion is not argument, and impertinence is not proof ; and as I have no intention of following his lead in this way, I shall answer his letter in detail.

“Facts are facts,” says Mr. Pennell ; and with Pennellian inconsistency commences his letter with a gross misstatement of fact, by accusing me of

having gratuitously provoked the controversy. He really must suppose his readers very defective in memory, if he suppose they have already forgotten that it was in answer to a personal attack by him in *The Field* I first wrote a reply.

By looking at page 47 of *The Practical Angler*, Mr. Pennell will find the pattern of hook which I recommend, and also the passage from which I accuse him of having borrowed the ideas upon which he has constructed the Pennell hook ; “ the result of some thought and experiment.” I got hooks made after that pattern for my own use, but—for reasons which Mr. Pennell cannot be expected to understand—did not think of calling them Stewart.

I did not accuse Mr. Pennell of plagiarising my worm-tackle. I said that he had introduced a new worm-tackle by reducing the three-hook tackle, which usually goes by my name, to two, and making the hooks a little larger. I distinctly charged Mr. Pennell with appropriating the title of my book, and charge him with it still. When Mr. Pennell called his book *The Modern Practical Angler*, he did not know of the existence of any other *Practical Angler* but mine ; and though his subsequent discovery may lessen the legal guilt, it has no effect upon the moral bearings of the question, and in no degree diminishes the shabbiness of Mr. Pennell's conduct to me.

I certainly did attribute Mr. Pennell's catching seven trout to my six in two hours' evening fishing

to chance, and cannot possibly see why he should find fault with that, when I also attributed my catching 26 lbs. weight to his about 6 lbs. in a whole day's fishing next day to chance also. Whether there is a want of both honesty and courtesy in Mr. Pennell's statement of his Lochleven excursion, the reader can judge for himself. *My statement is correct, and I have witnesses to prove it.*

Mr. Pennell charges me with having no eye for the amenities of literature. If the amenities of literature mean something like the following letter, which I select from his own correspondence, we are likely to differ upon this point also ; and that the reader may thoroughly understand the matter, I give the letter which drew forth this *gentlemanly and extremely argumentative* reply.

FLY-FISHING UP AND DOWN STREAM.

SIR—Mr. Pennell's letter in reply to Mr. Stewart strikes me as being, in reference to the main point under discussion, singularly feeble and evasive. One would have thought that a letter so exhaustive on this point as Mr. Stewart's would not have been answered by Mr. Pennell, having "nothing to add to his arguments of September 24." The only possible inference is that, as regards the *casus belli*, Mr. Pennell is judiciously abandoning an untenable position.

May I ask Mr. Pennell if he seriously contends that a fish can see behind as well as he can see before? and why he sanctions fishing up in "shallow waters with a sun and no ripple on them?" or how a stream should be fished with a rapid "draw" on, but no ripple?

Formerly a down-stream fisher myself, I have been for many years a convert to a great extent to Mr. Stewart's plan, and have at least half-a-dozen friends (some of them crack hands) who have changed their *modus operandi* with marked success.

Applied to sea-trout fishing, when a river is low and clear I will undertake to kill three fish to Mr. Pennell's one. In a medium-sized water my bag would be three to his two. In a big water I readily concede that fishing down is preferable, and always do so. Wading is much easier, consequently more ground is covered.

Mr. Francis has written excellent sense upon this subject, and, although books alone will never make anglers, I should recommend all who want a wrinkle or two about up and down stream fishing to read his concisely-stated remarks. LILLYHOLME.

SOUTHPORT, October 17.

FLY-FISHING UP STREAM.

SIR—Your correspondent, signing himself "Lillyholme," has thought it necessary to add to the already

voluminous correspondence which you have published on the up or down stream fishing, his principal object being apparently to take me to task for my reticence in replying to the numerous observations which have been made on the propositions contained in my article of the 24th of September on this subject. I really ought to feel very grateful to "Lillyholme" for being so good as to instruct me how to conduct my correspondence. Let me prove my gratitude by making in his case an exception to my general rule of passing *sub silentio* the attacks of anonymous writers, and I select with the more pleasure this mode of discharging my obligations to your correspondent, inasmuch as his letter furnishes a very fair illustration of one of the principal reasons of my reticence in this matter—viz. the total irrelevancy of most of the arguments used by my critics. "Lillyholme," who is doubtless the victim of that very prevalent modern disease, the "itch for writing," evidently does not understand how any one can resist an opportunity for rushing into print, or so far possess his argument in patience as to decline unnecessary weekly recapitulations and taxes on space which would be otherwise better occupied.

Now, I repeat that my original propositions—which were neither crude nor hasty productions, but the result of much thought and consideration—have never been fairly met or logically controverted, my opponents having usually adopted the very con-

venient mode of argument ungallantly attributed by a satirist to the softer sex—

She'll argue with you a whole summer's day,
And she'll refute—whatever you *don't* say !

I have noticed that “Lillyholme's” letter is a very fair instance of this kind of logic. Let me point out to him why I think so, taking sentences of his letter *seriatim*.

1st sentence. Mr. Pennell declines “to add to his arguments of the 24th Sept. ;”—*therefore*, it is evident that he “is judiciously abandoning an untenable position.”

2d sentence. Mr. Pennell having stated that “the position of the eye of a trout is such as to enable him to see much more readily anything above or on one side than in front of him”—“Lillyholme” begs to “ask Mr. Pennell if he seriously contends that a fish can see behind as well as he can before.”

3d sentence. “And why he sanctions fishing up in shallow waters with a sun and no ripple on them ?”—the sense of which question (having reference to juxtaposition and to my argument) appears to be about equal to that of the celebrated rigmarole, “What ! no soap ? So he died, and she very imprudently married the barber.”

The remainder of “Lillyholme's” letter consists of a *mélange* of small personalities, and great trumpet-blowings of his own many angling achievements *in posse*, and of how many more big fish he, the

critic, could catch, under various conditions of wind and water, than I, his unfortunate author—an enumeration in which (must I acknowledge it to my confusion ?) I find myself literally nowhere.

Perhaps “Lillyholme” will now have some glimmering why I do not think it necessary to be perpetually armed *cap-à-pie*, and ready to rush into conflict with every adventurous cavalier, known or unknown, who may wish to splinter lances under the safe shield of a *nom de plume* ; and if this letter should act in future abatement of the annoyance (which I observe I am not singular in expressing) of illogical as well as irresponsible criticism, the result apparently of mere love of contradiction, poor “Lillyholme” of Southport will not have been gibbeted in vain.

H. CHOLMONDELEY-PENNELL.

Mr. Pennell is again in error when he says I attributed to him a want of angling skill as compared with my own. Mr. Pennell attributed want of skill to himself, when he declined to fish a match in a stream because “more must depend upon the relative skill of the performers.” I have never in the whole correspondence said a single word about myself as an angler ; a fact of which he is aware, for he accuses me of always offering to fish by deputy. When I offered to bring a person to catch 2 lbs. weight for Mr. Pennell’s 1 lb., I certainly intended to fish myself ; and if that is his only objection to the match,

by all means let us have the up or down stream question practically tested, "owners up," as he expresses it ; and I by no means limit it to a Scotch burn, but will fish in any stream in England of the kind described. As for the match proving nothing and convincing nobody, I differ from that conclusion entirely; it would prove Mr. Pennell's flies useless, and his method of using them ridiculous. I thought it quite impossible that any one who knew anything of fly-fishing in clear water could write such nonsense as he has done. It seems, however, that there are some anglers who have courage to try anything new, however ridiculous, and at least one old angler equipped himself with some of the typical flies. Of course he fell a victim to his temerity, but let him speak for himself.

MR. PENNELL ON FLY-FISHING.

SIR—Most men who are fond of a sport like reading the experiences of others on that subject, and books on hunting and shooting contain ideas tolerably similar to those held by the rest of the hunting and shooting world. But writers on fishing (fly-fishing especially) seem to try how far they can set aside all acknowledged theories.

I read a book on fishing by Mr. Pennell some short time ago that out-herods Herod in this respect. I have been a fisherman with fly for twenty years,

and during the last five years have fished, I believe, as much as any man in England, and my experience is that fish take the artificial fly for the natural one. I see no difficulty in proving this by the water-side, but wish to say a word with regard to the three curious devices that Mr. Pennell in the above work recommends as typical flies.

Having procured some of different sizes (from one of his accredited agents), I tried them for grayling on three rivers—the Teme, Lugg, and Arrow—in this manner :—I made up a cast, with one of the typical flies as stretcher and another as drop, and between these I put on a third fly, in imitation of the one the fish were then taking. I killed a fair amount of fish each day, but every single fish on the imitation of the natural fly, not getting one rise to any of the three flies of Mr. Pennell's pattern.

There is a mention made in the book of Mr. Pennell's personal experience of the Leintwardine water on the Teme, although no statement of any take of fish by him there. I should like to know whether he ever killed any grayling of a takeable size on that water, using only his own three flies. I do not believe they would kill either brown trout or grayling on any river in the world that throws up any insect life, and even for lake fishing and white trout they could not hold their own with the ones generally used. The three salmon flies recommended in the book are all of one sort. Any salmon fisherman, if restricted to that number, could pick out of his book

three more adapted to different conditions of water. I think most fishermen will agree with me that it is rather presumptuous in Mr. Pennell to write epitaphs, as he says, on the system of fly-fishing that our experience has proved right.

DRAGOON.

Inconvenient questions Mr. Pennell declines to answer, and passes by with a few slang expressions ; and when charged with borrowing without leave a whole chapter on May-fly fishing, etc., seems to think I am most unreasonable in complaining of his conduct, because he has always spoken in praise of my book, and recommended his readers to study certain portions of it. I do not suppose that Mr. Pennell would have borrowed unless he had approved ; but if every one who plagiarises is to be held guiltless on these principles, a little further application of them would do away with the crime of theft altogether, as no one ever steals unless he admires the article. Had Mr. Pennell asked permission to make use of any portion of *The Practical Angler*, he would have been as welcome to it as on a former occasion.

It is quite as well Mr. Pennell has no *immediate* intention of applying to me for an angling diploma, for he would most assuredly be plucked in his preliminary examination ; but, if he will study *The Practical Angler* carefully, and practise the precepts therein contained, there is no saying but something might be done in this way ultimately.

I feel duly grateful to Mr. Pennell for his kind

wish that I may meet with a more manageable theme and a less unmanageable opponent for my next controversial *début*; but I would “meekly” point out to him that I cannot make a *début* in controversy twice, and in return would “blandly” suggest to him that, when he again indulges in controversy, it might be expedient to confine himself to the use of words of which he understands the meaning. I am, however, quite pleased with my opponent. Not being accustomed to writing, it is, I suppose, as well for me that I have had a feeble antagonist, with a hopeless cause, to commence with; and it is so easy to answer one like Mr. Pennell, who lays himself so delightfully open to attack—who, in fact, rushes “with bare bosom on the spear.”

In the preface to his book Mr. Pennell challenged the opinion of what he called the general parliament of anglers. I suppose the general parliament of anglers may be considered pretty fairly represented by the readers of *The Field* newspaper, and these in turn by the writers to that paper. Well, letter after letter appeared, but no writer had a single word to say in defence of Mr. Pennell's theories on flies. The verdict which the general parliament of anglers has unanimously pronounced against him he proceeds to reserve in his own favour, and with the most amusing gravity states generally what a giant in controversy he (Mr. Pennell) is, and how careful any one should be of attempting to break a lance with him—how he has gibbeted this one, thrown another

hopelessly on his back, and generally routed all his foes. Ill-natured people might remark that all this might have come better from a neutral party or a friend than from Mr. Pennell himself ; but then—to borrow the expression which this stickler for the amenities of literature used to “Lillyholme”—what could poor Pennell do ? the neutrals were all against him, and his friends—if he has any—probably thought it would be a work of supererogation to say anything in praise of a person so eminently qualified to act as his own trumpeter. One reviewer remarked that he hoped in the next edition of Mr. Pennell’s book to see it better, which Mr. Pennell can easily accomplish by deleting a little more of what is original, and substituting borrowed information. However, to be done with *The Modern Practical Angler* :—

“ Hope, like the glimmering taper’s light,
Adorns and cheers the way ;
And still, as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.”

And, even in this compound of plagiarism, absurdity, and self-conceit, the reader may discover one gleam of comfort, which he will find in the preface, where Mr. Pennell announces he has “probably addressed an angling audience for the last time.”

The up or down stream question having been thoroughly discussed—if it can be called a discussion, with about a score of evidently able anglers arguing and stating experiences on one side, and Mr. Pennell

asserting on the other—the general opinion may be summed up as follows: That in all small streams it is absolutely necessary to fish up. That in medium-sized streams, unless when large and discoloured, it is much better to fish up; but that in large streams, where it is almost impossible to wade up, more fish may be taken by fishing down, because more water can be covered. That these are exactly the views embodied in “*The Practical Angler*, or the Art of Trout-fishing, more particularly applied to Clear Water,” the following quotations will show:—

“When the water is of a dark colour, it conceals the angler from view, and disguises his tackle, and so he meets with fair sport. If the body of water, though clear, is sufficiently large to conceal him from the sight of the trout, as in Tweed, Tay, and other first-class streams, he may still meet with tolerable success. But in all our small rivers and waters, when they are low and clear, not one angler out of twenty meets with much sport, and the reason of it is, because the clearness of the water either allows the trout to see him, or enables them to detect the artificial nature of his lure; and to meet these difficulties as far as possible, is the great object to be aimed at in fly-fishing.

“The great error of fly-fishing, as usually practised, and as recommended to be practised by books, is that the angler fishes down stream, whereas he should fish up.

“We believe we are not beyond the mark in

stating that ninety-nine anglers out of a hundred fish down with the artificial fly ; they never think of fishing in any other way, and never dream of attributing their want of success to it. Yet we are prepared to prove, both in theory and practice, that this is the greatest reason of their want of success in clear waters. In all our angling excursions we have only met one or two amateurs, and a few professionals, who fished up stream with the fly, and used it in a really artistic manner. If the wind is blowing up, anglers will occasionally fish up the pools—(as for fishing up a strong stream they never think of it)—but even then they do not do it properly, and meet with little better success than if they had followed their usual method. They will also, if going to some place up a river, walk up, not fish up to it—their plan being to go to the top of a pool, and then fish it down, never casting their line above them at all.

“ We shall now mention in detail the advantages of fishing up, in order to show its superiority over the old method.

“ The first and greatest advantage is, that the angler is unseen by the trout. Trout, as is well known, keep their heads up stream ; they cannot remain stationary in any other position. This being the case, they see objects above and on both sides of them, but cannot discern anything behind them ; so that the angler fishing down will be seen by them twenty yards off, whereas the angler fishing up will

be unseen, although he be but a few yards in their rear. The advantages of this it is impossible to over-estimate. No creatures are more easily scared than trout ; if they see any object moving on the river's bank, they run into deep water, or beneath banks and stones, from which they will not stir for some time. A bird flying across the water, or the shadow of a rod, will sometimes alarm them ; and nothing connected with angling is more certain than this, that if the trout see the angler they will not take his lure. He may ply his minnow in the most captivating manner, may throw his worm with consummate skill, or make his flies light softly as a gossamer—all will be unavailing if he is seen by his intended victim.

“The next advantage of fishing up we shall notice, is the much greater probability of hooking a trout when it rises. In angling down stream, if a trout rises and the angler strikes, he runs a great risk of pulling the flies straight out of its mouth ; whereas, in fishing up, its back is to him, and he has every chance of bringing the hook into contact with its jaws. This, although it may not seem of great importance to the uninitiated, tells considerably when the contents of the basket come to be examined at the close of the day's sport ; indeed no angler would believe the difference unless he himself proved it.

“Another advantage of fishing up is, that it does not disturb the water so much. Let us suppose the

angler is fishing down a fine pool. He, of course, commences at the top, the place where the best trout, and those most inclined to feed, invariably lie. After a few casts he hooks one, which immediately runs down, and by its vagaries, leaping in the air, and plunging in all directions, alarms all its neighbours, and it is ten to one if he gets another rise in that pool. Fishing up saves all this. The angler commences at the foot, and when he hooks a trout, pulls it down, and the remaining portions of the pool are undisturbed. This is a matter of great importance, and we have frequently, in small streams, taken a dozen trout out of a pool, from which, had we been fishing down, we could not possibly have got more than two or three.

“The last advantage of fishing up is, that by it the angler can much better adapt the motions of his flies to those of the natural insect. And here it may be mentioned as a rule, that the nearer the motions of the artificial flies resemble those of the natural ones under similar circumstances, the greater will be the prospects of success. Whatever trout take the artificial fly for, it is obvious they are much more likely to be deceived by a natural than by an unnatural motion.

“No method of angling can imitate the hovering flight of an insect along the surface of the water, now just touching it, then flying a short distance, and so on ; and for the angler to attempt by any motion of his hand to give his flies a living appear-

ance is mere absurdity. The only moment when trout may mistake the angler's fly for a real one in its flight, is the moment it first touches the water ; and in this respect fishing down possesses equal advantages with fishing up. But this is the only respect, and in order to illustrate this, we shall give a brief description of fly-fishing as usually practised down stream.

“The angler, then, we shall suppose, commences operations at the head of a pool or stream, and, throwing his flies as far as he can across from where he is standing, raises his rod and brings them gradually to his own side of the water. He then steps down a yard or two, repeats the process, and so on. Having dismissed the idea that the angler can imitate the flight of a living fly along the surface of the water, we must suppose that trout take the artificial fly for a dead one, or one which has fairly got into the stream and lost all power of resisting. A feeble motion of the wings or legs would be the only attempt at escape which a live fly in such a case could make. What then must be the astonishment of the trout, when they see the tiny insect which they are accustomed to seize as it is carried by the current towards them, crossing the stream with the strength and agility of an otter ? Is it not much more natural to throw the flies up, and let them come gently down as any real insect would do ?

“In addition to drawing their flies across the

stream, some anglers practise what is called playing their flies, which is done by a jerking motion of the wrist, which imparts a similar motion to the fly. Their object in doing this is to create an appearance of life, and thus render their flies more attractive. An appearance of life is certainly a great temptation to a trout, but it may be much better accomplished by dressing the flies of soft materials, which the water can agitate, and thus create a natural motion of the legs or wings of the fly, than by dragging them by jumps of a foot at a time across and up a roaring stream. Trout are not accustomed to see small insects making such gigantic efforts at escape, and therefore it is calculated to awaken their suspicions.

“ We believe that all fly-fishers fishing down must have noticed that, apart from the moment of alighting, they get more rises for the first few yards of their flies’ course than in the whole of the remainder ; and that when their flies fairly breast the stream they seldom get a rise at all. The reason of this is clear :— for the first few feet after the angler throws his flies across the stream they swim with the current ; the moment, however, he begins to describe his semi-circle across the water, they present an unnatural appearance, which the trout view with distrust. Experienced fly-fishers, following the old method, who have observed this, and are aware of the great importance of the moment their flies alight, cast very frequently, only allowing their flies to float down a

few feet, when they throw again. We have seen some Tweedside adepts fill capital baskets in this way ; but, as we have before stated, it will only succeed when the water is coloured, or when there is a body of clear water sufficiently large to conceal the angler from view."

I mention, subsequently, that when wading is an objection, the angler should fish down ; and also, "The only circumstance in which fishing down has the advantage of fishing up, is when the water is so dark or deep that the fish would not see, or if they did see, would not have time to seize the flies, unless they moved at a slower rate than the stream."

In my first letter, I accused Mr. Pennell of quoting a few lines without giving the context, so I give quotation and context here.

"We must confess, however, that fishing up stream with fly has not been adopted by a large portion of the angling community, and that for various reasons. In spite of the strong manner in which we cautioned our readers about the difficulties of fishing up stream, numbers who read the arguments for it, and were struck with the soundness of the theory, thought they saw at a glance the cause of their previous want of success, and that in future the result would be different. Having equipped themselves à la *Practical Angler*, and even taken a copy of that excellent work in their pockets, they

started with high hopes on their new career, but the result was not different, and after one or two trials with no better success, not a few have condemned fishing up stream as erroneous and ourselves as impostors ; though we imagine the fault lies with themselves. We have met with anglers fishing down stream—and this is no supposititious case, but one which we have seen over and over again—with a copy of this volume in their pockets, who complained that they had got everything herein recommended, and were getting no sport. On pointing out to them that there was one important mistake they were committing, in fishing down stream instead of up, they stated that when they came to a pool they fished it up—that is to say, they first walked down the pool and showed themselves to the trout, and then commenced to fish for them.

“ ‘The trout within yon wimplin’ burn
Glides swift, a silver dart ;
And, safe beneath the shady thorn,
Defies the angler’s art.’ ”

“John Younger objects to this as incorrect, but we rather think that Burns is right and the angler wrong ; as it is evident the poet alludes to a trout that has caught sight of the angler, and safe he is, at least *pro tem.*, as our pupils who first frighten the fish by walking down a pool-side, and then fish up it, will find to their cost.

“Others object to fishing up stream, as requiring

too frequent casting, being too fatiguing, and because they have been accustomed to fish down, and would prefer fishing in that way, even though they do not catch so many trout. If any angler prefers catching five pounds weight of trout fishing down stream, to ten pounds weight fishing up, we may wonder at his taste, but it is no concern of ours. Our duty is to point out how most trout can be captured in a given time ; and that is by fishing up stream, and such is now the method adopted by all the best fly-fishers of the day.

“Those anglers who have adopted fishing up stream are principally those who were adepts in the old system, and who were possessed of all the nicety in casting, and other knowledge so essential to successful up-stream fishing.”

Since I last published upon angling, there has been a marked decrease in the number of trout in most of the border streams, and it is now—unless weather and water are exceptionally favourable—a very hard day’s work to make even a decent basket ; and it becomes a subject worthy of the serious consideration of all anglers, to see if anything can be done to improve the state of matters, or at anyrate, prevent them from getting worse ; for if the trout-fishing falls off as much during the next ten years as it has done during the last ten, it will hardly be worth while going to the water-side at all. The causes that have occasioned this are no doubt various,

and amongst the minor ones may be mentioned the increase of manufactories, and the quantity of lime put upon the land. To this latter cause is probably owing the almost total disappearance of minnows from Tweed and some other streams, and, if injurious to minnows, it must be the same in some degree to young trout. As, however, trout are getting fewer in number in streams where manufactories have not yet reached, and where lime is comparatively little used, the main cause must be looked for elsewhere. There are also undoubtedly a great many trout taken by netting, but there is no evidence that netting is more common now than it was fifteen years ago ; the precautions taken to prevent it are much greater, and, if there is any difference, it seems probable that there are fewer trout killed by the net than formerly. The great cause of the diminution I believe to be over-fishing with the rod ; there are in fact too many anglers, or they fish too much. Land will only grow a certain quantity of grain, or maintain a certain number of cattle or sheep, and in like manner a stream can only rear and maintain a certain quantity of trout, and unless a sufficient stock is left to breed from, it is evident that gradual decrease must be the result ; and sooner or later the conviction will be forced upon anglers that they must not kill so many trout. The remedy which at once suggests itself is, that there should be a close-time for trout. There is a close-time for salmon, also for oysters ; in fact, in

regard to this latter fish, Government has been compelled, in addition to the close-time, to make regulations as to size, etc., in order to prevent proprietors from exterminating their own property. Sea-gulls have even been put under the protection of law, and there seems no valid reason why trout—a fish that affords healthful amusement to a greater number, than any other fish that swims, or any bird that flies, should not also be put under the protection of the law.

The period of close-time I should propose to be those months when trout are out of condition, say roundly from the middle of October to the middle of March, the time being varied according to the nature of the stream or district. If the stream or district is early, the close-time should commence sooner and terminate sooner; and, if the stream or district is late, the reverse. Some people who are not acquainted with the real state of matters may be of opinion that there are not many trout killed during the months of the proposed close-time; but if any one holding such an opinion will pay a visit to Tweed in the end of October or November, when the river is in flood, he will soon be convinced of the contrary. Trout are more easily taken in a flooded water at that season of the year than any other, and he will find every pool suitable for the purpose literally clad with anglers, following one another down at intervals of a few yards, and, when they reach the bottom of the pool,

returning again to the top, and this process goes on so regularly and so continuously, that—and this is no exaggeration—I have seen two broad footpaths marked on the green bank with the regularity of a pair of rails. Of course all the parties engaged are nominally fishing with worm, but the real slaughter is done with salmon-roe. The reader will of course say salmon-roe fishing is illegal; what of that? it is just as much fished with as ever, and is cured on Tweed and tributaries by the hundredweight. All the salmon-roe cured is used, and yet I have never, since the Act was passed, seen a single conviction for using salmon-roe, or being found with it in possession. The Tweed Commissioners should, as a matter of course, look after this, but that existing but almost useless body probably have not sufficient means at their disposal, and certainly do not make the best use of the means they have, as they allow kelt-killing and parr-killing to go on under their very eyes, *and with the sanction of their bailiffs*. The trout killed in October and November are almost all spawning fish, and, if they were left to deposit their ova, it would give a considerable increase in the number of trout in any stream where such practices go on.

The proposal for a close-time will, of course, meet with great opposition, especially from the principal offenders, but I would point out to all honest anglers, that, in what are usually called open waters, angling *is a privilege and not a right*, and if that privilege

is not exercised in a fair and sportsmanlike way, proprietors may at any time take the matter into their own hands, and stop the public from fishing at all, and unless some steps are taken, such will be the result. Truth may be sometimes unpleasant, but it is nevertheless truth, and the fact—however painful the admission may be—is, that anglers as a class have less of the true spirit of sportsmen about them than the lovers of any other field sport. They will kill kelts, kill par, fish with salmon-roe, or break the law in any way, if they think they can get off without detection, and, like the proprietors of oyster-fisheries, salmon-fisheries, etc., must be protected against themselves.

The formation of Angling Associations should also be encouraged, who would collect funds, and see that the existing laws were fairly carried out by the members; and if any one, not a member of such association, were caught fishing illegally, any proprietor would doubtless grant an interdict against his fishing again.

The question will of course arise, What is to be done with a river like the Clyde, which contains grayling, a fish which is in its prime when trout are out of condition? Holding the views already mentioned about the honesty of a certain class of anglers, I would make no exception in favour of allowing anglers to fish grayling in the Clyde. The anglers who fish at that season are of the very worst sort, and if allowed to fish grayling, there are very

few who would be inclined to lay odds, that, in the very probable event of their catching more trout than grayling, they would return the trout to the river. Besides, the cultivation of grayling should not be encouraged ; they are an inferior fish to trout ; they live upon the same sort of food as trout, and, as a river only supplies a certain quantity of feeding, if there are more grayling there must be fewer trout. They are also in season at a time of year when angling is shorn of almost all its charms.

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THE PRACTICAL ANGLER,

OR

THE ART OF TROUT-FISHING

MORE PARTICULARLY APPLIED TO CLEAR WATER.

By W. C. STEWART.



OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

“Mr. Stewart has the reputation of being a most successful angler, and his fame is on many waters. Therefore, holding the views which we have already expressed touching the general selfishness of the fraternity, we cannot too much admire his single-heartedness in compiling a work which, if attended to, must transmute the veriest tyro into a tolerably prosperous fisherman. We suspect that some who now rank as his rivals will barely thank him for his revelations, on the score that it is not expedient either to multiply the number of rods, or to divulge secrets which must tend to a considerable thinning of the streams. They, the adepts, believe themselves to constitute a high and worshipful piscatory lodge, with mysteries peculiar to their degree; and they may not altogether approve of the extreme liberality of their excellent brother in opening the eyes of the uninitiated. However, they may comfort themselves with the reflection that darkness rather than light is the deliberate choice of the million. The best teaching in the world is thrown away upon stupidity and self-conceit; and that not only in ethics, but in such practical matters as angling. . . . One special recommendation of this book as an angling treatise is, the clearness with which Mr. Stewart lays down his positions, and the care which he has bestowed on the proof. He does not content himself with merely giving directions; he explains, and always lucidly, why such directions are given.

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prejudiced by egotistical theory, of sound judgment, and whose whole some knowledge of the habits of trout renders all that he says about the best modes of capturing entitled to the utmost confidence. . . . Every young fly-fisher, desirous of becoming proficient in by far the pleasantest and best branch of the angling art, should study the excellent and manifold maxims laid down in this most valuable little treatise. The tyro that does may rest assured that he is in his right path, following a practical, experienced, clever, and conscientious guide."

ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS.

"That patient class of British sportsmen for whom the Blink-bonnys and the Skirmishers of the turf live and race in vain, and whose hearts are not with the Kestrels or the Americas on the waters of the Solent, or in the tents of the scorers at Lord's or Kennington Oval, but continue to believe, summer after summer, in the spirit of the old song—

‘Oh! the gallant fisher's life,
It is the best of any!’

will take this terse little book to their bosom, and make it the companion of many a river-side pilgrimage. Its aim is not to give any highly-tinted dissertation on the joys of angling, or to produce a series of mental pictures of its most favoured haunts. Alas, for the silver trout! the author had a much more practical and deadly object in view; and although the gentle craft have had teachers, and to spare, since their quaint old Isaak wrote, it was reserved for him to prove that almost, if not quite, as good sport may be had in clear water as in coloured.

"Mr. Stewart brings a large stock of enthusiasm, and fifteen years practice, to his work. He has gleaned for his letterpress, and his hook and bait illustrations, from nearly all the first amateurs and professional anglers of the day, and exchanged minds with Jamie Baillie, the veritable senior wrangler of fly-fishing in Scotland. Delightful as it may be to a beginner to wander, rod in hand, along the banks of some river in May or June, among meadows rich with the daisy and the cowslip, or to contemplate nature in her grander, but not less beautiful aspect, on the rocky heather-clad verge of a Highland stream—the pleasures of the day always bear some proportion to the weight of the basket brought home; and the finest scenery influences are but an indifferent compensation for an empty creel.

"By carefully studying the precepts so pithily and pleasantly enunciated here, no tyro need despair, after he has undergone his probation, of becoming a practical angler; and even those who worthily aspire to that distinction already, and have acquired the necessary neatness of hand and quickness of eye, may have their observation not a little sharpened and their prejudices sapped. The treatise is remarkably complete in all the details of the trout-fishing art. Fresh-water trout—the causes of their decrease, the season when they are in highest condition, and every phase of their natural history—claim a

chapter. All the minutiae of an angler's equipment are gone into with quite a Gerard-Dow minuteness, and so on to artificial fly-fishing, flies, fly-dressing, May-fly fishing, and trouting with the fly. Angling with the worm, which he considers to possess one very solid advantage over fly in the superior size of the trout caught, is also copiously handled, as well as minnow and parr-tail baits. Loch-fishing, in which the accomplished angler and the tyro are most upon a par, has, nevertheless no small charm in his eyes; and his book is appropriately concluded by some precepts on 'the best means of filling a basket in May, June, July, August, and September.' The author has shown, to quote the late Mr. Barnes, 'lots of grapple' in dealing with his subject; and we trust that his readers may be able to act up to the spirit of the phrase, and remember his advice when they feel the thrilling nibble, and have to go gallantly into action at a moment's notice with a Highland *Salmo ferox* in the approaching summer."

SATURDAY REVIEW.

"Mr. Stewart's book, *The Practical Angler*, entirely fulfils its title. The author, who is said to be the best fisherman in Scotland, has an object, and keeps it steadily in view—it is to teach the art of killing trout in clear water. He says, and with entire truth, that anybody can kill fish in a coloured stream. His cardinal point of faith is to fish up-stream. Here is true wisdom. A trout lies up-stream—his work is to take flies and food floating down-stream. In fishing up-stream you are behind your fish, and, great as are the capacities of a fish's eyes, it stands to reason that the angler at his tail has more chance of being undiscovered than if he charges his enemy *en face*. Next comes the advantage that in striking a fish your chances are greater in striking against him than in snatching from him. And when you have struck a fish you pull him into water that you have already fished over—you pull him down stream, leaving all the water above you undisturbed. What is meant by fly-fishing? Of course the object is to deceive the trout into the belief that he sees a real live fly. Which is most likely to deceive him—a fly cast above him and gently floating down to him, or one cast in the ordinary fashion, and madly crossing the stream at eccentric angles and with galvanised jerks? Real insects never cross a stream, driving up against the current by superhuman, not to say superinsectine, leaps and plunges. Fish may be caught by flies drawn up and across the stream; but nature's way is the best, and that floats flies down stream. Of course in dark and coloured waters the difference is less important; but Mr. Stewart's lesson is how to kill trout in clear water. And we heartily subscribe to his canons—with the modification that casting up stream is not to be always straight up, but diagonally, going over the whole water, but still casting upwards. Another very sensible observation of Mr. Stewart is that the colour of a fly is not half so important as the way in which it is made to fall and float on the water. A small fly and clear gut are *sine quibus non*; and the thing to aim at is the appearance of life, not colour, in your artificial bait. A more practical, sound, sensible, and unpretending

book we never read, and we recommend it without abatement or qualification."

SCOTSMAN.

"This book is the probable inauguration of a new era in the art of angling. . . . Although the angler's library is already a pretty full one, each half-century for the last three hundred years having produced one or more pleasant and useful additions to it, we have no hesitation in saying that it cannot be complete without this little volume. Nowhere that we know of in the same compass, or indeed in any compass, is there so much valuable practical instruction to the trout-fisher. Mr. Stewart indulges but little in those graces of composition through which some of our least useful angling-books are rendered the most charming to the reader, but crams every page with information, which, from its obvious accordance with common sense and sound theory, not less than from its being vouched for by an angler of large experience, and of a skill that has never yet been matched, commends itself as valuable even to the most sceptical and self-satisfied adept."

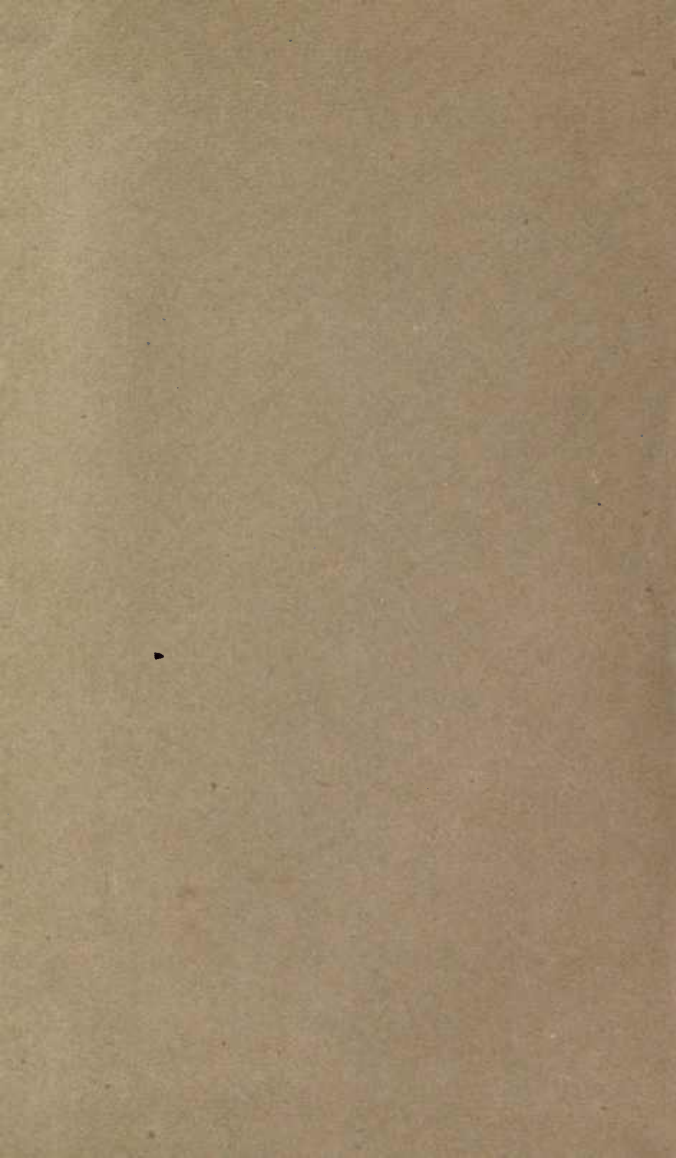
THE FIELD.

"The modest unpretending little volume before us is decidedly welcome. *The Practical Angler*—we like the title. We are prepared to find something practical in it, and thanks be, for once we are not deceived. It is practical in every sense of the word. . . . We can recommend this little book to tyros or anglers in the transition state of every grade and shade, and even the finished practitioner may find in it something worthy of notice."

JOHN BULL.

. . . . "But the author needs no excuse, and has limited himself to no specialty. He has given us the very best hand-book of angling that we know of; and it is a material part of its merits that it occupies so small a compass; for most anglers, however they may affect a voluminous fishing-book, are disposed to cavil at prolixity in a treatise on this science. Short as it is, the work contains all that is needed, either for the fly at the one end of the machinery, or the angler at the other. How to make your fly, how to throw it; how to hook your fish, how to land it; all about your own habits and those of the trout, is told in a simple and sportsmanlike style. — Mr. Stewart is the Colonel Hawker of fishing."

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